



Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held Virtually on Tuesday 27 October 2020 at 2.00 pm

Members Present: Mr A Moss (Chairman), Mr K Hughes (Vice-Chairman), Mrs C Apel, Mrs T Bangert, Mr G Barrett, Mr D Palmer, Mr C Page, Mr H Potter, Mrs S Sharp, Mr T Johnson and Mr M Bell

Members not present: Mrs N Graves

In attendance by invitation:

Officers present: Ms P Bushby (Divisional Manager for Communities), Mr A Frost (Director of Planning and Environment), Mrs J Hotchkiss (Director of Growth and Place), Mrs D Shepherd (Chief Executive) and Mr J Ward (Director of Corporate Services), Mrs L Rudziak (Director of Housing and Communities), Miss K Davis (Democratic Services Officer)

32 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

33 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Minute 25: Events Strategy and Events Policy: Miss Davis provided an update to the progress of the recommendations arising from the last meeting. The Chairman confirmed that both he and Mr Bell had attended Cabinet to address the Committee.

34 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

35 **Declarations of Interests**

Mrs Apel declared a personal interest as a Trustee of Stonepillow.

Mr Bell declared a personal interest as a Trustee of Stonepillow.

Mrs Sharp declared a personal interest as a Chichester City Council appointed member of Chichester BID.

36 **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

37 **Covid 19 - Progress Covid 19 Recovery Action Plans**

The Committee considered a progress report on the Covid 19 Recovery Action Plan, which provided an update on the latest financial position, progress on the four thematic recovery plans, and an update on the efficiency review and the future services framework.

Mrs Shepherd introduced this item and outlined the report. The Council's income streams had gradually started to improve and further Government financial support had been received. Early indications from the Council's efficiency review were promising and as a result it was likely that the majority of the funding gap would be eliminated over the 5 year planning period. Good progress had been made despite having to undertake new areas of work, which was testament to the hard work undertaken by officers during the Covid 19 pandemic. The Strategic Management Team continued to ensure environmental considerations remained a "golden thread" running through the recovery plan, with all projects being assessed for environmental impacts before they commenced. A report on proposed efficiencies would be presented to this Committee on 17 November 2020 before being considered by Cabinet on 8 December 2020. It was expected that most of the predicted budget deficit would be covered by these efficiency and income generating ideas, ensuring that the Council could continue to protect its frontline services. Progress on the Future Services Framework would be included in the next quarterly recovery report to this Committee. It was important that the Council remained flexible in its approach in these challenging times to ensure key services continued to be delivered to the community.

Mrs Lintill referred to the considerable amount of work undertaken by officers and members. She thanked the members of the recovery groups for their input and encouraged all members to come forward with any ideas for the Council's recovery.

Housing and Communities Recovery Action Plan

Mrs Rudziak provided an overview of progress on the Housing and Communities Recovery Action Plan detailed at appendix 1 of the report.

A number of members of the Housing and Community Recovery Group were invited to address the Committee in respect of progress.

- Members expressed their thanks to officers for their work to move rough sleepers into temporary accommodation and the initiatives put in place moving forward.
- Concern was raised that residents may experience difficulties accessing help with Mental Health issues and struggle to get GP appointments because of the

pandemic. Mrs Rudziak provided details of the mental health support provided to rough sleepers. West Sussex County Council, through Public Health, would provide support for rough sleepers at the Community Hub when it was open during the winter evenings. Mr Briscoe advised that a trained mental health nurse was deployed with one of the Sussex Police patrols in the District during the evenings. Mr Sutton provided details of the mental health support provided to people who represent themselves at hospital.

- Mrs Rudziak undertook to provide further details about the housing register system upgrade outside of the meeting, which as a result would suspend bidding for a short period until the new system started.
- Mrs Rudziak undertook to provide details of the remaining budget for the Homeless Prevention Fund, outside of the meeting. The review of this Fund was partly to make the funding more flexible as they were not being spent.
- Funding for the Housing First project had been extended to 31 March 2021 and beyond that the Council would work with StonePillow to seek further funding. The Council had fed back to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the difficulties encountered in providing projects with one year funding.
- The volunteer and community groups mapping showed good coverage across the District. However, to overcome gaps in the more rural areas some groups had extended their coverage. The map would become a permanent feature in the Council's Emergency Planning room.
- Mrs Bushby provided details of the work undertaken, by this Council and other organisations during the first Covid 19 lockdown, particularly how to assist the clinically seriously vulnerable. As a result fewer volunteers would be needed in case of a further lockdown.
- As a result of the pandemic the Council had taken the opportunity to strengthen the pathways for rough sleepers with the funding received.

Economic Recovery Action Plan

Mrs Hotchkiss provided an overview of progress on the Economic Recovery Action Plan detailed at appendix 2 of the report.

A number of members of the Housing and Community Recovery Group were invited to address the Committee in respect of progress.

- A request was made that the Council should do all it could to support the Council's Estates Manager to find alternative accommodation for the remaining tenants of St James Industrial Estate.
- During the pandemic flexibility should be given to the display of advertisements by retailers to encourage customer footfall. Mr Frost advised that retailers should contact the Development Management Service to enable officers to maintain a degree of control. Contact details for retailers to email requests would be provided.
- With regard to the circular economy, the Council was aware of the work undertaken by Transition Chichester, as part of the local circular economy. The Council was assisting with access to grant funding.
- The need to build on our workforces existing skills and those of the graduates at the University of Chichester was raised. Mrs Hotchkiss advised that the University of Chichester had set up the Hot House business, which provided free

advice to pre-start ups and existing businesses and training to re-skill the workforce.

- Mrs Hotchkiss provided details of the work to ensure the markets operated in a safe environment and to address declining numbers.
- Since the Council had taken over responsibility for pavement licensing from West Sussex County Council officers were mapping the location of pavement licenses, to establish the available space left for outside activities and markets.
- The Council was working with the Design Collective. A potential opportunity was the agreement of a landlord to allow art design work to be displayed in a vacant retail unit.
- Details were provided details of the Council's focus for the District's economic recovery and investment.
- A rebranding of Chichester for a literacy festival was suggested as the District had a number of literacy walking connections, such as the Old Way, which could be linked with the Great Sussex Way. Mrs Hotchkiss referred to the wealth of offer to provide festivals to link with the tourism sector. A project was underway to provide a year of Culture during 2022 to promote the District.
- The social and economic impact assessment had been extended to include Fishbourne Roman Palace and the Weald and Downland Living museum.
- The type of pedestrian barriers located on the highway in East Street to maintain social distancing, were necessary to meet West Sussex County Council's requirements. Mrs Hotchkiss agreed to review the length of shop queues to see whether the barriers were still required.

Planning, Health and Environmental Protection Action Recovery Plan

Mr Frost provided an overview of progress on the Planning, Health and Environmental Protection Recovery Action Plan detailed at appendix 2 of the report.

A number of members of the Planning, Health and Environmental Protection Recovery Group were invited to address the Committee in respect of progress.

- Mr Frost undertook to provide details of the new flexibilities for small and medium sized enterprises outside of the meeting, concerning the timing of CIL payments where concerns about viability are raised by developers.
- Cycling, walking and public transport were matters the Local Plan addressed by encouraging provision of alternative modes of transport to link with existing infrastructure.
- Mr Frost agreed that the proposals in the Government White paper on Planning for the Future should not undermine the planning process with regard to local engagement.
- Mr Frost advised that the Council was part of the Defra planting project to boost tree planting outside woodlands. He undertook to discuss local issues with Mrs Bangert outside the meeting, concerning tree retention.
- The application timescale for the Council to determine proposals by developers to extend permitted hours of construction was short. Developers were expected to carry out local notification before making their application to the Planning Authority.
- Mr Frost undertook to find out from West Sussex County Council what the latest position was for the second tranche of pop up cycle lanes in Chichester. A

comment was made regarding the benefits of a pedestrian crossing to enable a safe walking and cycling route across Oaklands Way. The crossing proposed as part of tranche 2 should be supported.

- The Council was looking at the potential for renewables to be used within the Council's estate or to be extended through new planning policies.

Mrs Lintill informed the Committee that some of the issues mentioned by members were for the recovery groups to consider going forward. The suggestions made by members had been taken note of and would be investigated outside of the meeting.

Organisational Recovery Action Plan

Mr Ward provided an overview of progress on the Organisational Recovery Action Plan detailed at appendix 2 of the report.

A number of members of the Organisational Recovery Group were invited to address the Committee in respect of progress.

- Item 7 Finance OR11 Medium term Savings Opportunities" was written before efficiency savings were identified. Most efficiencies, now identified, could be dealt with under delegation to officers, as they were not necessarily changes to Council policy. Any changes to Policy would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee before consideration by Cabinet.
- Mr Ward confirmed that UNISON staff representatives were fully involved in the recovery process and details were provided of the monthly meetings that took place.
- Although the impact on staff would be minimised, it could not be guaranteed that there would not be any redundancies.
- Mr Ward undertook to find out the number of non-digital responses to Customer survey, if that information was available.
- Despite the Council offices being closed, there were a variety of ways customers could contact officers, including face to face meetings by appointment.
- With regard to the staff survey, the issues surrounding office space and the environment at home were understood and steps had been taken to provide a flexible approach for staff. If there was a good reason why staff could not work from home then they could come into the office to carry out their work.

Mr Johnson outlined his paper recommending the formation of a separate Towns and Villages Recovery Group. The Chairman advised that Mr Johnson's suggestion would be considered as part of the Committee's comments to Cabinet.

The Committee recommended the report to Cabinet and thanked the officers and all members who had contributed to the report and recovery groups. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has raised the following topics of interest and would like the Cabinet to consider further relating to: Mental health; Support for the surface level Northgate, Chichester pedestrian crossing; and to expedite the transfer of existing tenants of St James Industrial Estate, Chichester in addition to the remit of the recovery groups.

RECOMMENDED

- 1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends this report to Cabinet and thank officers and all members for their contribution to the recovery groups and the report;
- 2) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee raises the following items and asks Cabinet to further consider:
 - a) Mental health;
 - b) Support for the surface level Northgate, Chichester pedestrian crossing;
 - c) Expedite the transfer of existing tenants of St James Industrial Estate, Chichester.
- 3) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee invites Cabinet to look at the paper produced by Mr Johnson on the formation of a Towns and Villages Recovery Group.

38 **Late Items**

There were no late items.

The meeting ended at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN

Date: